Letters from Prisoners.

Of the fevers from Poisons.

I said formerly poisons were animal mineral - aerial and vegetable, and that they acted upon all the systems specifically. Even the blood is acted upon specifically by one of them.

Most of them induce disease & death by acting primarily upon the stomach, bowels and blood vessels in a manner analagous to Miasmatic and in a direct & indirect manner. The disease thus induced is either one ~~of the Remedies proper to this~~ of the forms of intestinal fever, ~~always~~ or one of the primary forms of arterial fever for which the following remedies

V ~~[illegible]~~ exciting another action in the stomach, or in some other part of the body.

have been found useful.

I Such as discharge the poisonous matter from the stomach when it is confined to it, or destroy ~~its~~ activity ~~by~~ by ~~neutralizing with it~~ diluting, or decompo=sing it, or which render it inert by V

II Such as discharge the poisonous matter from the bowels, ~~and~~

III Such as obviate the disease in=duced in the blood vessels.

To the I Head belong Emetics. These should be exactly the same as have re=commended for discharging landa=num for the stomach in the lecture upon the fever induced by Opium. If this be impractible, ~~such~~ 2ly

2

Such ~~& The~~ remedies ~~which are intend~~ should be employed as
Destroy the Activity of the poison
by blunting or decomposing it. These
should be regulated by the nature of the
poisonous ~~nature~~ matters. If they be of a
saline or soluble ~~nature~~ nature, dilution with
large quantities of water, or ~~the~~
one or two draughts of milk, or
sweet oil, or melted butter will be
proper. Certain poisons may be de-
-composed, and thus rendered inactive
the stomach. For example - if corro-
-sive sublimate has been swallowed,
a little vegetable alkali will detach
the muriatic acid from the mercury

and have the mercury in an inoffensive state ~~[illegible]~~ ~~mercury~~ in the stomach. Sulphur has been advised to destroy in like manner the activity of Arsenic, but I doubt much whether a union can take place between them so as form an opiment in the stomach. If the poison resist these remedies, a new action should be excited in the stomach by means of Laudanum or ardent spirits, — or in the bowels by acrid glysters, or upon the skin by blisters — or mustard, or spirit of turpentine, or by means of flagellation.

3

II If the poison should pass thro' the
5 stomach, and produce pain and
inflammation in the bowels, the
Remedies should be large quantities
of milk, sweet oil, or melted ~~water~~ butter
taken by the mouth and injected in
the way of Clyster. — While I was
a student of medicine I assisted in the
recovery of a respectable Citizen of
Philad.a who had taken an ounce of
the Sulphate of Lime instead of an
ounce of purging salts by mistake of
~~the~~ two of those remedies. [The
injections which were often repeated,
were given by my hands] ~~I have~~

Dr Robert formerly of the Island of Do=
=minique informed me, that he had
prevented death by the same means
in a man who had drank a pint
of whey made with half an Ounce of
arsenic which he obtained by mis=
=take from an Apothecary, instead of
half an Ounce of Cremor tartar.
In all cases of violent pain from
~~[illegible]~~
the Action of poisons in the stomach
or bowels, bleeding will be useful.
It will ~~will~~ prevent inflammation.
- It will abstract morbid excitement
from the stomach and bowels, and
it will enable the System longer

4

and with more safety, to sustain the outrage that has been committed upon it by the poison. —

I have said the effects of poisons appear in the blood vessels in all the usual forms of ~~[illegible]~~ fever. The poison acts indirectly in thus inducing fever, but it sometimes acts directly by being introduced into the blood vessels by means of a wound. Before we proceed to mention the remedies for the cure of the fever induced by the poisons, it will be proper to inquire into the means of preventing this fever by the abstraction of the poison before it mixes with the

V they escape the morbid effects of the poison upon the whole System.
4 Lotion, 5 Suction and 6 excision are all proper according to the nature of the poison and the seat of the wound.

We come next to mention

blood. The remedies employed for this purpose are, 1 a Ligature above the wound which by pressing upon the Veins, prevents the poison being suddenly mixed with the whole mass of blood. 2 applying ~~bruised~~ any stimulating substance to the wound so as to excite an inflam.n in it, and a discharge of the poison from it. The Indians use bruised, or chewed Snakeroot for this purpose. a blister or a weak caustic would answer much better. 3 burying the wounded limb in fresh earth, or applying fresh earth to the wound. Dogs, I said formerly, when bitten by Snakes scratch a hole in the ground, and place the wounded part in it by which means

and with more safety, to restain the outrage that has been com-
-mitted upon it by the poison.

III The remedies which are proper to remove the effects of poisons when they appear in the blood vessels. These should be the same as for fevers from any other cause. If the pulse be active or depressed, bleeding should be employed, and afterwards purges and sweating medicines. The last have been generally resorted to, probably from a belief that the poison was thus to be expelled only thro' the pores. ~~This was~~ The Seneka, &c

Serpentaria also the volatile Alkali have been employed for this purpose. It is not in this manner we attempt to expel the miasmata which produce bilious & jail fevers from the blood. The attempt would be equally fruitless to discharge ~~them~~ any other poison from the body in the same way. After bleeding & purging emeating will be useful especially if nature shows a disposition to it. It will act as it does in bilious fevers by the abstraction of ~~quantity~~ the stimulus of quantity, and thus ~~lessening~~ lessen the stimulus of quality.

When the blood vessels are affected

with a feeble morbid action, the Re=
=medies should be of a cordials and
stimulating nature. The caustic vol:
alkali has been used with great
success in Insanes, and latterly in the
East Indies in the ~~low~~ fever induced
by the bite of the Cobra de Capello.
In this fever the blood vessels are
nearly paralyzed by the poison, so
that nothing can keep up their ac=
=tion except the most prompt and
active stimuli of which the caustic
vol: alkali is perhaps the best in
the whole materia medica.

With all these remedies, blisters

Dr Mosely has mentioned a fact which shows that a strong irritation made upon the stomach when poisons have mixed with the blood may serve the same purpose, that a strong irritation made upon the skin does when a poison is lodged in the stomach or bowels. He tells us the Indians in South America prevent death from the bite of poisonous snakes by swallowing large quantities of Cayenne pepper. The efficacy of large doses of Bark, Wine & Laudanum in certain states of malignant fever, (which act, we know powerfully, upon the stomach) in saving the system from disorganization and death by miasmata (which are aerial poisons) favours the reasonableness of this Indian practice.

and other stimulants applied to the skin might be used to advantage.

The more we divest ourselves of ~~a belief that the power of~~ the prejudices of the Schools upon the specific nature of poisons in inducing fevers, and in favor of specific remedies for its cure, and the more we subject that fever to the laws which regulate all other fevers, and the remedies that cure them, the more easily and safely we shall arrive at a certain and successful mode of treating them.

I have hitherto spoken only of the common forms of fever, produced by poisons, but they sometimes

produce the eruptive ~~and~~ the hemorrhagic the maniacal, the Dysenteric, and the hydropic states of fever all of which require exactly the same treatment which I shall recommend hereafter for those states of fever. The Hydropic state of fever is induced by the bite of an insect called Dipsas ~~described by an ancient poets~~ It is attended with a great swelling and thirst. It is described by one of the ancient poets.

We are told by travellers that the Savages of many Countries prevent the morbid effects of poisons upon them by certain medicines of a vegetable nature. Baron Humbolt informed me that the Indians in South America drink a decoction ~~employing~~ of certain herbs for this purpose,

V poison of the Musquito, the Spider and the Cashew nut of Barbados are of this nature. The remedies for it should be the same as for Erisipelas, or for the same grade of any other cutaneous disease.

I lament that our time will not permit me to descend more minutely into this Subject. If you admit the Unity of disease, and the Unity of Stimulus or irritation in inducing disease all further details upon it will be unnecessary. I have given you a principle, and a single principle in medicine if ~~true~~ true, is worth a Volume of lifeless, unconnected facts.

and afterwards ~~expose themselves~~ permit them-
-selves to be bitten by poisonous snakes.
When we consider how few snakes are
poisonous, and how many wounds made
by such as are said to be so, heal of
themselves without doing any harm,
I am disposed to doubt most of the
accounts that have been given upon
this Subject. ~~But it~~ It is possible ~~they~~ their
preventives may act as cordials or
as sedatives and thus weaken the force
of the disease produced by the poison,
~~in the same manner~~, but it is not
probable they wholly destroy it. —

I have only to add that there
are certain poisons which ~~affect~~ act primarily on the
skin ~~only~~, and which affect the
blood repel only by Sympathy. The